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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses problems associated with rurbanization, which is the invasion of rural areas by affluent urban and surburban people seeking a "country" lifestyle. There is a distinction between lifestyle--which reflects an individual's values, attitudes, and affluence--and culture, which is a design for living adapted to a group's social and physical environment and passed down through generations. Rurbanites affect a lifestyle, while rural communities have a culture. The impacts of rurbanization on hunting, fishing, and trapping are apparent in the development of land that once belonged to wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. Rurbanization contributes to the decline of rural culture by altering the economy of rural communities and contributing to the degradation of rural values and attitudes. Rurbanization results from and contributes to a lack of connection with the land, the natural world, and its processes. It also supports a trend away from pluralism and diversity and toward fundamentalism, ultimately leading to cultural death. Strategies for reversing the decline in rural culture include sustaining farms, farm families, and farming-based communities; promoting diversity and appreciating that rural values and way of life are another aspect of cultural diversity; infusing outdoor education throughout all grade levels to help connect students with the natural world and their community, and to support the building of personal stories reflecting rural traditions; and supporting nonformal approaches to outdoor education that encourage participation in outdoor activities and rural traditions. (Contains 9 references.) (LP)

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The Suburbanization Of America And The Future of Hunting and Fishing: How To Get People Back In Touch With The Land

or

Rurbanites: The Problem Of Keeping Two Roosters In the Same Henhouse

Bruce E. Matthews
Executive Coordinator
Coalition for Education in the Outdoors

presented at the
Annual Conference of the
Outdoor Writers Association of America
Bismarck, North Dakota
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.....Like all the locals here I've had to sell my home
Too proud to leave I worked my fingers to the bone
So I could own my Downeaster Alexa....

I've got bills to pay and children who need clothes
I know there's fish out there but where God only knows
They say these waters aren't what they used to be
But I've got people back on land who count on me....

I was a bayman like my father was before
Can't make a living as a bayman any more
There ain't much future for a man who works the sea
But there ain't no island left for islanders like me

from "The Downeaster Alexa"
© 1989 by Billy Joel

I think it was the rooster crowing at 4:00 a.m. in the tree just outside my window that first called my attention, rather rudely, to the problems of rurbanization. This occurred some years ago while living in Bow Lake Village, NH, a small New England town that was becoming increasingly attractive to commuters willing to drive an hour or so each way to Boston and other regional cities.

A woman from Connecticut had just bought the defunct Bow Lake Inn down the street, and the word about town was that she hoped to repair, renovate and run it as an inn again. What was more immediately apparent was her wholehearted leap into what she perceived as rural living, which included buying a horse, three goats, a few geese, a flock of chickens....and two roosters-- which she proceeded to try to keep on about a half acre of marginal land.

The rooster outside my window that morning may have been in love with my own small, roosterless flock of hens, but more likely he was the loser in the inevitable conflict with the other rooster the woman kept. And so the battle was joined.

I caught that rooster at least three times, patiently returning it and telling her it was no good trying to keep two roosters and would she please eat it or get rid of it. The absurdity of it all hit me particularly hard at 4:30 one summer morning after I'd thrown rocks at it in the tree and was chasing it down the road toward the inn. Being stark naked I'm not sure what I'd have said if anyone saw me chasing that rooster, but fortunately I never had to find out.

The rooster eventually disappeared (and no, I wasn't responsible!), but her horse's periodically sampling my garden didn't, and he was a lot harder to catch. The inn never got renovated and we moved to Michigan not long after, so I don't know the rest of the story. It seems however that since the rooster episode I've found more and more times when I've been confronted with the problems of rurbanization.

Thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts with you today on why rurbanization is a problem, and what we might do to mitigate it. In my view this is one of today's most critical issues facing rural communities and outdoors enthusiasts, particularly hunters, trappers and anglers.

<u>What Is 'Rurbanization'?</u>

Rurbanization is a term coined to define the invasion of affluent urban and

suburban-oriented people into rural areas, looking for a self-defined 'country' lifestyle, while importing urban attitudes and values, and expecting urban amenities. The resulting conflict tears apart the fabric of rural communities, and often destroys the very nature of the 'country' experience originally sought, though few rurbanites realize it.

It is important, while defining rurbanization, to note the distinction between a lifestyle and a culture. A lifestyle is freely chosen by individuals or families and reflects their values, attitudes and affluence. Culture, on the other hand, is a design for living, uniquely adapted to the social and environmental characteristics of a group of people interacting with each other and the land, and is passed on from each generation to the next. The rurbanite affects a lifestyle. Most rural communities, if relatively undisturbed by outside influences, can be considered to have a culture.

This distinction is in some ways analogous to the difference between digital and dial watches. When you check the time on a digital watch, you see only the instant at hand, the present moment. A dial watch, on the other hand, gives you a sense of place in time, of knowing where you've been as well as where you're going. The rurbanized lifestyle is like the digital watch, aware of and concerned only with the present. A rural culture, because of its sense of the past, has a basis for knowing why things are as they are presently, and where they are likely to go.

Impacts on Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

The impacts of rurbanization on hunting, fishing and trapping are particularly apparent to sportsmen and women. For example:

In Tully, New York, where I live, a set of beautiful lakes crown the terminal moraine left by the glacier, and are supplied by one of New York's largest and purest aquifers. These lakes have been accessible to generations of Tully's residents, for fishing, swimming and other recreation. The fall migration of ducks and geese through this major corridor is something to behold, and these lakes once offered waterfowl hunting of the finest kind. However, since homes have been developed surrounding these lakes all access has been shut off. Land has been posted, and the

only boat access left, a channel leading to a lake from a road, was eliminated recently when the landowner stretched a chain-link fence across the channel at water level.

The two remaining small lakes which have yet to be developed have been proposed as a park. Not surprisingly, many of the newcomers living nearby in their expensive new homes do not want this to happen, since it will attract 'the public' to what they regard as their private domain. To them, it is preferable to see the lakes and the wild land surrounding them disappear into private homes than to enable the public to access the remnants of what once was available to all.

In the four years I've lived in Tully (and incidentally in a 40 year old farmhouse) 12 new homes have been built on farm and wildland within a half a mile of my home. As we talk there is another under construction. The spot where my son trapped his first gray fox is now 10 yards from a new $200,000 home. We don't even want to discuss what the new folks think about trapping! (see Trapper and Predator Caller, October 1991, *A Trapper's Dilemma*)

Its getting so I can't even hoe my garden in the nude anymore. Lord help me if I happen to spread a load of particularly odiferous manure on it!

.....

Rurbanization has three major problems associated with it. It contributes to the decline of rural culture in America. It results from and contributes to a lack of connection with the land, the natural world and its processes. And it supports, and is supported by, a trend away from pluralism and diversity and toward fundamentalism in this country.

Decline of Rural Culture

Rurbanization contributes to the decline of rural culture in America, which some experts feel contributes to the breakdown of society in general. In his book, ***Trees, Why Do You Wait***, Richard Critchfield discusses how America's rural culture is changing, and why this is so dangerous. He demonstrates that the further a society moves away from its rural agricultural origins, the more likely crime, drugs, homelessness, environmental problems and the breakdown of families and social

ethics will occur. Critchfield examines rural communities in detail, one of which, fittingly, is in North Dakota. His findings on the value of these communities include a sense of "attachment to one's native place" being particularly strong among rural dwellers; a society based on fixed family and community ties; living close to nature and in tune with the seasons and natural rhythms; an "agricultural moral code and ethic of mutual self-help still rooted in day to day economic reality"; and a sense of community responsibility where neighbors don't mind telling you 'your mom and dad wouldn't like it' if you act up.(Critchfield 1991)

Rurbanization contributions to the decline of rural culture in a number of ways. Where once the community's economy was locally driven, the arrival of rurbanites brings a dual economy. Since many rurbanites work in distant locations their economic livelihood is not tied to that of the rural community. They are often two-income families, further widening the gap. This causes problems when local farmers, self-employed persons (except developers) and farm-related businesses are financially stressed, as is now more the rule rather than the exception. The K-Marts, Wal-Marts, McDonald's and Burger Kings closely following the rurbanites' invasion corridors, displacing the local cafes and merchants and creating a service economy with a net outflow of the community's dollars.

In an effort to survive, farmers parcel off their land to developers, who build newer and more expensive homes, attracting more people who are even further from the economic norm of the original community. Eventually the price of land and houses, and taxes as rurbanites demand more services, becomes inflated beyond the means of the original dwellers. It is the height of irony when the rooted children of a rural community are forced to live elsewhere because they cannot afford to live in what was once their own place.

The problem, however, extends beyond the economic. Critchfield writes "These urban invaders-and many ex-farming communities will have to depend on them to survive-while they don't understand the rules do want some of the old traditions for their children.... But the social life that counts in a rural community turns around births, marriages, deaths, the church and the school. It takes engagement and time. It takes restraint of self-interest in favor of community. It

takes the old economic basis of farming to make it happen."(Critchfield 1991, p. 247) In plain terms, too few rurbanites invest their time in being active in these communities. Further, immersion in the rural setting does not guarantee absorption of rural values or attitudes toward the land. As Critchfield points out, "[Rurbanites] lack the evidently essential organic tie to the land that a farmer has". (Critchfield 1991, p. 239)

The rural community thus becomes vulnerable to the loss of its culture. Wendell Berry, probably the most eloquent and deep-thinking defender of America's rural tradition, writes "The loss of local culture is, in part, a practical loss and an economic one. For one thing, such a culture contains, and conveys to the succeeding generations, the history of the use of the place and the knowledge of how the place may be lived in and used. For another, the pattern of reminding implies affection for the place and respect for it, and so, finally, the local culture will carry the knowledge of how the place may be well and lovingly used, and also the implicit command to use it *only* well and lovingly. The only true and effective 'operator's manual for spaceship earth' is not a book that any human will ever write; it is hundreds of thousands of local cultures. ...Lacking an authentic local culture, a place is open to exploitation, and ultimately destruction." (Berry 1990, p.166)

Lack of Connection with Land

Rurbanization results from and often contributes to a lack of connection with the land, the natural world and its processes. This lack of connection in any meaningful way is the underlying cause of many of our environmental and social problems. People have insulated and isolated themselves from the natural world. For many of us who enjoy hunting, fishing and trapping, this is the most immediate problem, particularly since for many, these activities are themselves the primary means of reconnecting to the natural world and its processes. For many rurbanites, their desire to live in the country reflects a yearning to be closer to nature, and rural culture, yet these are still defined according to urban values.

Rurbanites whose closest contact with wildlife may have been watching Jacques Cousteau's version of nature on the boob-tube are enamoured with the idea of being surrounded by 'wildlife'. They are already predisposed toward

anthropomorphizing, thanks to Walt Disney. Having been insulated from the natural world, with all its terrible beauty, the rurbanite is quick to project a value system in which hunting, trapping-- and to be consistent fishing--have no place. Conflict then arises because these activities are highly consistent with the rural tradition and values in most areas of America. This conflict in values is often projected along economic class lines, making the issue even more difficult to address.

Rurbanites often have difficulty when wildlife does not meet their predetermined expectations. The 'mean' coyote that stole the neighbor's cat, the 'awful' hawk that killed a chicadee at the bird feeder, the 'careless' deer that walked in front of the car, the 'stupid' skunk that moved its family beneath the garage may not be consistent with rurbanite expectations; in the same way that the anticipation of living in the country never includes the smell of hogs on the breeze. Never mind that some of these problems may be the direct or indirect result of reduced or concentrated habitat due to the construction of new homes! Yet the demand continues for non-lethal means of resolving these problems, and hunting is still viewed as somehow an 'unnatural' act.

Thorsten Veblen foresaw this problem of lack of connection in the late 1800's, as he observed an emerging urban culture seemingly unhindered by any apparent limits imposed by nature. (1979) The conspicuous consumption this led to is readily apparent today, where self-restraint is not valued and economic restraint is limited only to the amount of credit one can secure on a charge card. The concept of nature as a limiting factor is therefore foreign to many rurbanites. Humans are perceived as somehow separate from nature, not viewed in any way as part of the natural process, and therefore limited only by imagination, or lack of technology.

This skewed perception leads to a simplistic, sanitized and edited version of nature, free of unpleasant smells or violence. It creates a population so anesthetized to the natural world it has lost the sense of awe and respect that ought to accompany the taking of life so that others may live. It distorts reality to the point that blood becomes, instead of the stuff of life, something to spray across a cinema screen, the more copiously done the more likely the financial return.

Paul Theobald writes "The major philosophical difference underlying rural and urban living is the relationship of people with nature. If nature is the home of human beings, then they must care for that home wisely. This circumstance does not confront urban people so forcefully as it confronts rural people....[it is] less relevant in an urban setting." (1992)

Julian Smith, known as the father of the outdoor education movement, saw this when he stated that one of the needs of people in modern society is to 'have their roots in the soil'. "In a society that is becoming increasingly urban, ways must be found to create attitudes and an appreciation of man's relationship to the land....too many [people] are now so removed from the land that they have no knowledge or concern about the sources of food, shelter, and clothing.... Many believe that contact with the land is essential in the normal growth of an individual." (Smith 1972, p.11-12)

To be fair, rurbanites <u>are</u> seeking to reconnect. They <u>are</u> responsing to the need that Smith describes- that's why they move to the country. But their ignorance about nature and their urban values prevent them from seeing the big picture. And so 'nature' becomes a bird feeder and two acres of manicued chem-lawn, and an endless skirmish with raccoons over possession of the family garbage.

<u>Rurbanization vs Pluralism</u>

Rurbanization supports, and is supported by, a trend away from pluralism and diversity and toward fundamentalism in this country. Fundamentalism involves the desire to reduce things to a dogmatic level, which, while understandable in an increasingly complex world, nevertheless contributes little to the solution of problems. A fundamentalist approach monopolizes ideas, leaving no room for consideration of other ideas, and is intolerant of the smallest differences of opinion. As with religious fundamentalism, the viewpoint held is regarded as literally inerrant, thereby offering security and self-justification at the same time.

In failing to appreciate and respect the rural culture that preceded their arrival, and in hypocritically rejecting many of its values, rurbanites fall into this deadly trap. The failure to value and appreciate diversity, as ecology teaches, leads

ultimately to extinction. The tunnel-visioned zeal that leads a rurbanite into smug, self-justified deprecation of rural culture in such areas as hunting or trapping, attempting to impose their values on others because their philosophy represents the 'one true way', is an example of fervent fundamentalism of the worst sort.

In today's global society, a failure to develop a genuine appreciation of the differences of others will lead to isolationism, exclusion and ultimately cultural death. Wendell Berry writes "without a diversity of people we cannot maintain a diversity of anything else. By a diversity of people [I mean a] people elegantly suited to live in their places and to bring them to their best use, whether the use is that of uselessness, as in a place left wild, or that of the highest sustainable productivity." (Berry 1990, p. 121)

Yet increasingly the rooted rural inhabitant is being colonialized by the rurbanite, and by economic circumstances beyond his or her control. The rurbanite senses the moral degeneracy of this, is made insecure by it and consequently adopts the tactic which is least likely to offer opposition- bulldozer-style fundamentalism.

Berry argues that "our places are asking us questions, some of them urgent questions, and we do not have the answers". (Berry 1990, p. 114) The intolerance of the rurbanite in accepting any value system but his own insures that our places will get no answers. Only through the lively interplay of open minds and diverse ideas will solutions come about-solutions which are likely to come from those who know the land best and whose culture and tradition has been built in and reflects harmony with that land.

It is perhaps tempting to idealize rural culture, to glorify it and even fall in the same fundamentalist trap into which rurbanites are lured. Critics of rural life can certainly make a case for the lack of perfection found there, and in no way do I wish to be perceived as ignoring these problems. While it is beyond the scope of this presentation to consider these, I believe that the flaws that do exist, however serious, do not significantly alter the essence of my argument.

Solutions

Decline of Rural Culture

The way to reverse the decline in rural culture is to assure that a critical mass of farms, farm families and farming-based communities is maintained. (Critchfield 1991) Since the federal government's massive efforts to support farmers already exist, it would be easy enough to slough the problem off and suggest that the government take care of it. This would be a mistake, as Berry asserts, and even sees as a major part of the problem. To reestablish strong local communities, strong local economies and strong local culture the people of these communities must be empowered from within-- not, as has been the norm for most of this century, through government, corporate or university programs. (Berry 1990)

"....if improvement is going to begin anywhere," Berry believes, "it will have to begin out in the country towns... The renewal of the rural communities....could be the beginning of the renewal of our country, for the renewal of rural communities ultimately implies the renewal of urban ones. But to be authentic... this would have to be a revival accomplished mainly by the community itself....from the inside by the ancient rule of neighborliness, by the love of precious things, and by the wish to be at home." (1990, p. 168-9)

Rurbanization vs. Pluralism

Rurbanite fundamentalism is a symptom of a larger problem, an alarming trend away from the acceptance of the differences of others and the valuing of diversity. Certainly examples of racial, ethnic, religious and other forms of bigotry are readily apparent today and need no further consideration here. As the movement for multiculturalism and diversity awareness begins to gather momentum, as it is doing at this moment, it is important to include an appreciation of rural values and ways of life along with the consideration of the more apparent problem areas. Bias and discrimination are no less debilitating when it occurs against rural cultures than it is against African American, Native American and other cultures. But it will take sustained effort to be sure that rurbanite prejudice and colonialist attitudes are perceived as such, and that in order for society to move in the direction of equality and an appreciation of diversity it must move on <u>all</u> fronts,

not just those most visible or 'politically correct'.

Former Harvard president Derek Bok called recently for a social philosophy for the '90s that "moves beyond self-serving individualism"(Bok 1992). Bok argued for a renewed commitment to public service and to helping others, values which have always been part of the rural tradition. Turning away from self-gratification and toward the self-sacrifice about which Berry and Critchfield speak is increasingly being seen as the way to return society to the social atmosphere Bok is promoting. Rural values provide the basis for this, but they cannot be emulated at the same time they are being discriminated against.

Lack of Connection with the Land

The problem of lack of connectedness is not limited to rurbanites. It is pervasive in urban and suburban areas, and though rural communities live closer to the land they are sometimes themselves the most short-sighted in their use of the land. How can this connection be established, or reestablished?

We build stories. We build stories in the natural world. We build stories that connect us to the places where the stories happen, where the places and events are intertwined. The Native Americans knew this well, often describing a place in terms of something that happened there. Wallace Stegner writes extensively about the importance of having a sense of place, an identification of self with environment. Joseph Campbell's work helps us understand the importance of myths, rituals, ceremoies and traditions to a society, all of which are derived from stories. And social scientists confirm the process that supports this story=building.

Alan Gussow says "A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings." (1983) These places become places because stories happen to us there. As we tell the stories, and experience places over time, we build a history with places. Eventually the places feel like home, as in fact they are. And as we view the land as our home instead of a commodity, as Aldo Leopold liked to say, we can no longer consider abusing it. As people build stories together, they then share common experience in a community, a key element in developing human understanding. In time, the sense of community and place is globalized.

So who helps this process? Who is in the best position to encourage the building of these personal and community stories with the natural world? Who is responsible for them? Where cultural traditions continue unimpaired the family, and community elders play the major role. In our mobile and urbanized society, with changing family structures and fast-paced lifestyles this responsibility increasingly falls to the schools. In addition, great potential exists with non-formal education and recreation programs, and, yes, the media can play an important role as well.

The best way for formal education to respond to the need to connect students with the natural world, and to support the building of stories, is through the infusion of outdoor education methods throughout the curriculum, from pre-kindergarten and Head Start programs through high school. Time does not permit the full exploration of the mechanics of how this is done, but when teachers are reaching curriculun objectives through using the outdoors as an educational resource, and when students are learning in, for and about the outdoors, all kinds of connections can take place, and all kinds of stories can be built.

But we need teachers capable of using outdoor education, who are not intimidated by the outdoors or administrators and colleagues who feel threatened by this departure from the current norm. Therefore we must start with the recruitment of teachers. Teachers who hunt, fish or are otherwise predisposed toward using the outdoors themselves, who already possess a rich personal history with natural places, must be recruited into the ranks of educators. This must be done, not with the intent to indoctrinate but to present a balanced perspective. And every effort must be made to recruit teachers from rural communities and return them to those communities. These teachers are in the best position to understand and support local culture.

Preservice training programs in our colleges and universities must get students outdoors. Courses must be taught in outdoor education, and education majors must be required to take them. Research shows that teachers model the behavior and techniques used to educate them. Teachers consistently exposed to outdoor education at the preservice level are far more likely to use outdoor education methods when it comes their turn to teach.

It is much more difficult to see the effects of inservice education, since teachers already entrenched in and indoctrinated by the educational system are far less likely to make the needed changes to include the outdoors in their teaching. However, inservice programs attempting to motivate and empower teachers to connect with the natural world, and to understand and nurture the local culture from which their students are derived, may be effective with those teachers open to change.

School reform is gaining much attention currently. Increasingly, schools as they exist today have little to do with the process of education. In 1981 Wendell Berry wrote "Institutions unless constrained by the moral vision of the persons in them... move in the direction of power and self-preservation, not high principle." Schools in rural settings do nothing to combat rurbanization, because "the purpose of education [in the U.S.] has been to prepare people to 'take their places' in an industrial society". (Berry 1990) A glance at any of the literature promulgated by President Bush's America 2000 education strategy unfortunately offers abundant support for this observation. "Schools are no longer oriented to a cultural inheritance...., but to the career.... The child is ... educated to <u>leave</u> home and earn money in a provisional future that has nothing to do with place and community." (162) "...The new norm interrupts the development of the relation between children and parents... that same interruption, ramifying through a community, destroys the continuity and so the integrity of local life. As the children depart, generation after generation, the place loses its memory of itself, which is its history and culture." (165)

Calls for school reform, in addition to addressing the concerns raised by Berry, need to include a recognition of the unique role that outdoor education can make in reversing this lack of connectedness-with the community <u>and</u> the natural world. In addition, in order to counter the effects of rurbanization, Berry suggests that schooling incorporate rural knowledge and concerns, place and community; reaching an equilibrium with nature; caring for one another; cherishing the land; and a knowledge of local culture, tradition, ritual and land. (Theobald 1992)

Environmental education is being touted as the way to create an

environmentally literate citizen, to connect people with the natural world. But environmental education is not a substitute for outdoor education. While environmental literacy is a laudable, and essential, goal the problem with environmental education is that it is perceived by many educators as something someone else can do.... like the 'science' people. Environmental education then gets relegated to the earth science curriculum, or perhaps a 'feel good' celebration of Earth Day. Outdoor education, if done well, happens throughout all aspects of the curriculum.

The problem with a science-focused approach to environmental education is not the lack of quality science teaching so much as the fact that you can't solve environmental problems unless you understand the sociocultural dimension of the problem, and <u>that</u> is classified as social studies! Environmental education, properly done, is an interdisciplinary approach that involves the entire curriculum, not a terribly popular suggestion in today's compartmentalized educational structure.

Further, as Stephen Kellert says, "how much people know about the natural world is not a very good predictor of their attitudes about it". (Kellert 1992) What is lacking, simply, are the stories built through outdoor education. Teaching environmental education without the outdoors experience is like licking a popsickle through the wrapper. The outdoors is where the <u>soul</u> of the experience lies. Without a sense of the spirit of the natural world, gaining factual knowledge about it is becomes just another empty academic exercise, with questionable validity in terms of developing environmental literacy.

If we are to provide for environmental literacy with soul, and I submit it is the only environmental literacy worth having, we need to find ways to empower our teachers to take kids outdoors to celebrate cycles and seasons, to develop their own myths and ceremonies and traditions, to allow students to explore to find their own special places. It cannot happen by sandwiching it for 40 minutes between reading and math. It must in itself become reading and math and science and social studies and music and art and dance.... a blueprint for living and an education worth having. It starts with courageous teachers and parents and schools willing to say the system is not working! We must act to save our children, our environment, our

culture. It is time for a change, a real change, not a band-aid or make-up job! It is time to empower our kids, to have our community become our classroom, to involve our youth in the problem-solving process, participating in making education real!

This is why environmental education needs outdoor education. Without the outdoor experience there are no serious stakeholders in the process. It is analogous to doing biomonitoring of a stream without fishing. You can study all the benthic organisms, the chemistry of the water and you can know all there is to know about its biophysical characteristics, but unless you fish its waters you cannot know the depth of commitment and affection that will truly save that stream. Without this deep personal connection, built through stories over time, often while fishing, the commitment to preserve and protect that stream will not be as strong. The outdoor experience, the fishing, is what enabled you to become a stakeholder in the first place. Its why you care.

I need to return to this idea of indoctrination, because it is an important one, and a common mistake made by zealous environmentalists entering the teaching profession. Educators seek to empower learners, providing the skills, information and guidance needed for learners to evaluate for themselves what the most right course of action might be, and to motivate learners to act courageously according to their convictions. Indoctrinators lack confidence in their message, and so they seek to influence the outcome. This, of course, is unethical. A true professional educator recognizes her or his personal biases, and assures that students are exposed to opposing perspectives.

Unfortunately, there are 'educators' out there who by ignorance or design do seek to indoctrinate students. Consider this example from a letter sent me by an individual signing herself as an 'outdoor education specialist' with a public school, complaining about the inclusion of hunter education information in our Coalition for Education in the Outdoor newsletter: "I am disgusted to see your organization supporting and condoning such horrific practices as 'trophy' and 'big game' hunting. There is no place for activities such as this (sic) in education.... You can, in no way, consider yourselves 'educators'. It is obscene that you encourage and support the destruction of our natural world and wildlife in a newsletter erroneously referred to

as environmental". Gee, I wonder what side she is on...

But formal education is not the only, and perhaps not even the best way to help people find ways to connect with the natural world and a rural tradition. In many areas efforts are being made through nonformal approaches to involve people in outdoor activities .

One example is New York's Sportfishing and Aquatic Resources Education Program. SAREP, as it is called, is an effort to use a community club approach through 4-H to involve youngsters in fishing, and to use that interest in fishing to develop an understanding of aquatic ecology, a sense of stewardship and appreciation for aquatic resources, and a commitment to fishing ethically and responsibly. Instructors are trained to return to their communities and begin programs with these youngsters, in an effort to pass on the tradition of fishing. Over 300 instructors have been trained so far, with close to 4000 youngsters involved in an on-going, club program. In our view this approach returns much bigger dividends in terms of committed anglers than a one-shot derby approach. Since I coordinate this effort I'll be happy to cover any questions you might have, including the contacts for Aquatic Resources Education in each state.

Another program which has just been initiated in New York is the Apprentice Hunter Program. This program is an effort to connect young hunters, who have no one to take them hunting, with veteran hunters, trained by the program to act as mentors. Bill Jacobs is heading up this effort, and may be contacted at 21 South Putt Corners Rd., New Paltz, NY 12561, 914-255-5453.

With today's single parent families, families with both parents working and the frenetic lifestyles we lead, someone other than a parent or family member may have to step in to be sure that rural traditions get passed on.

The media, as we are sometimes painfully aware, can influence how this connection takes place. It is beyond the scope of my expertise (and impertinent!) for me to presume to suggest to a room full of media professionals the best ways to accomplish this. I believe the outdoor media must continue to be sure that an

honest coverage of hunting, trapping and fishing issues be done; that outdoors enthusiasts act ethically; and further to hammer out the message that all the Earth Days in the world, all the green pledges, all the exhortations by public figures in no way can stack up to a still November dawn on a deer stand, or a chilly April opening day of trout season, shared with someone who cares about you and the outdoors, for making connections and building stories. Earth day doesn't connect you with the land. Hunting and fishing and trapping do. Period.

How to combat the effects of rurbanization? Support, encourage, demand and work for outdoor education in formal and nonformal settings, outdoor education that connects people with the outdoors, builds personal stories as well as an1 appreciation for the rural tradition. Comunicate the value of rural culture, its crucial importance for the maintenance of our American tradition, and for the future of our society.

Thank you.

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